DR. STRANGE
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DOCTOR
STRANGE™
MASTER OF THE MYSTIC ARTS
A WORLD STANDS ON THE BRINK OF OBLIVION-- AND ONLY ONE MAN MIGHT SAVE IT--
--BUT NOW, THAT MAN IS DEAD!
WHO KILLED HIM? THE SHOCKING ANSWER AWAITS YOU IN--
IF THIS BE DOOMSDAY!

Once he was a man like most *others* — a *worldly* man, seduced and jaded by *material* things. But then he discovered the *separate* reality, where *sorcery* and *men's souls* shaped the forces that shape our *lives*. In that instant, he was *born again*, to become a man like *no* other—a man who left us *behind*, as he strove to stand against the unseen subtle perils hovering *thick* and *black* around our fragile existence...

Stan Lee PRESENTS: Dr. STRANGE MASTER OF THE MYSTIC ARTS!™

FINAL CURTAIN!

PRAISED BE! MAGIC IS MINE ONCE MORE!
THE WORLD TREMBLES AT THE BRINK OF SELF-DESTRUCTION ... DR. STRANGE HAS SWORN TO TURN IT FROM ITS FATE!
BUT THE WORLD IS LARGE... FULL OF MANY DANGERS THE MYSTIC MASTER CANNOT HOPE TO KNOW!
COME... ENTER... AND SEE...
...THE END!

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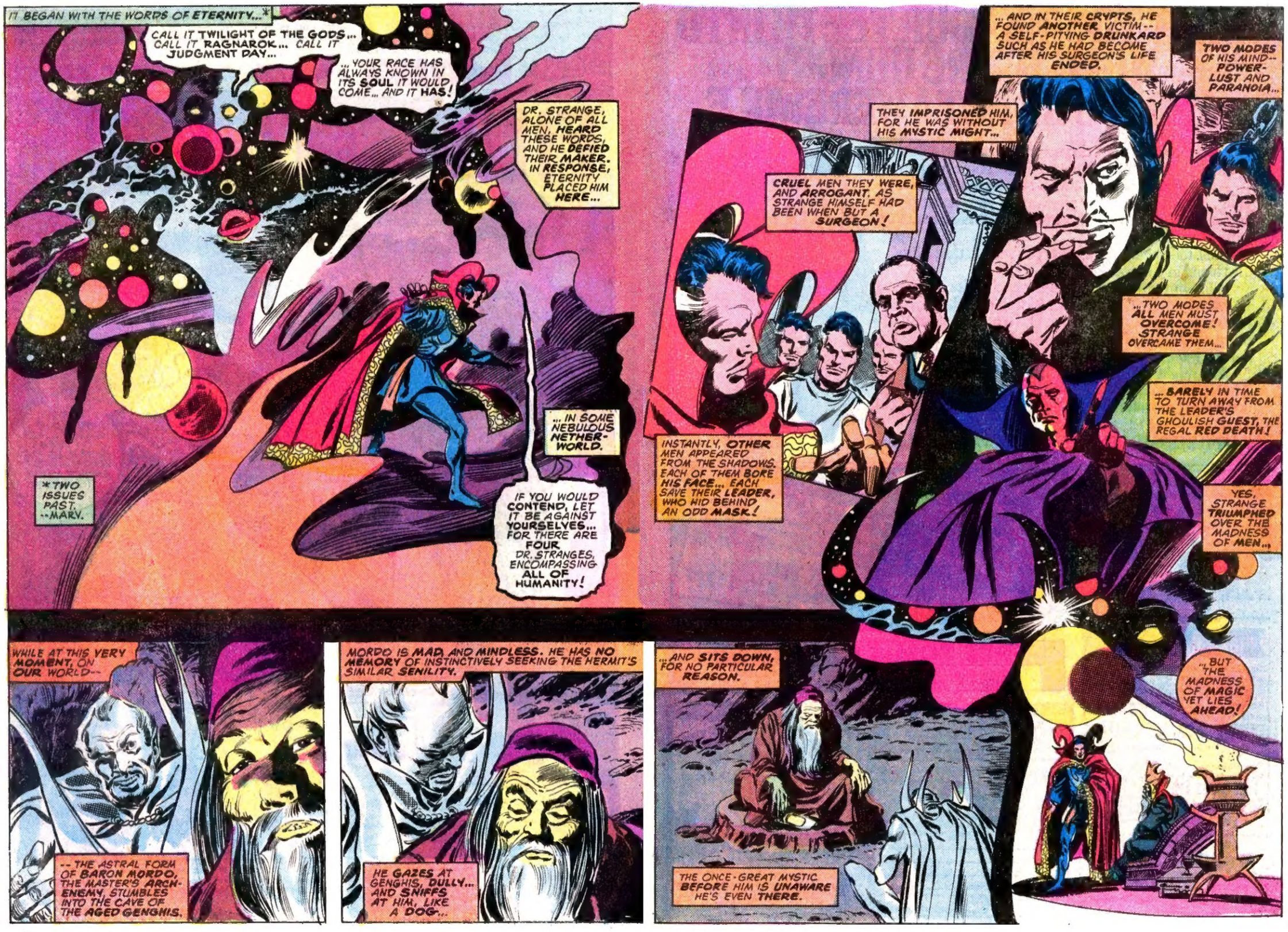
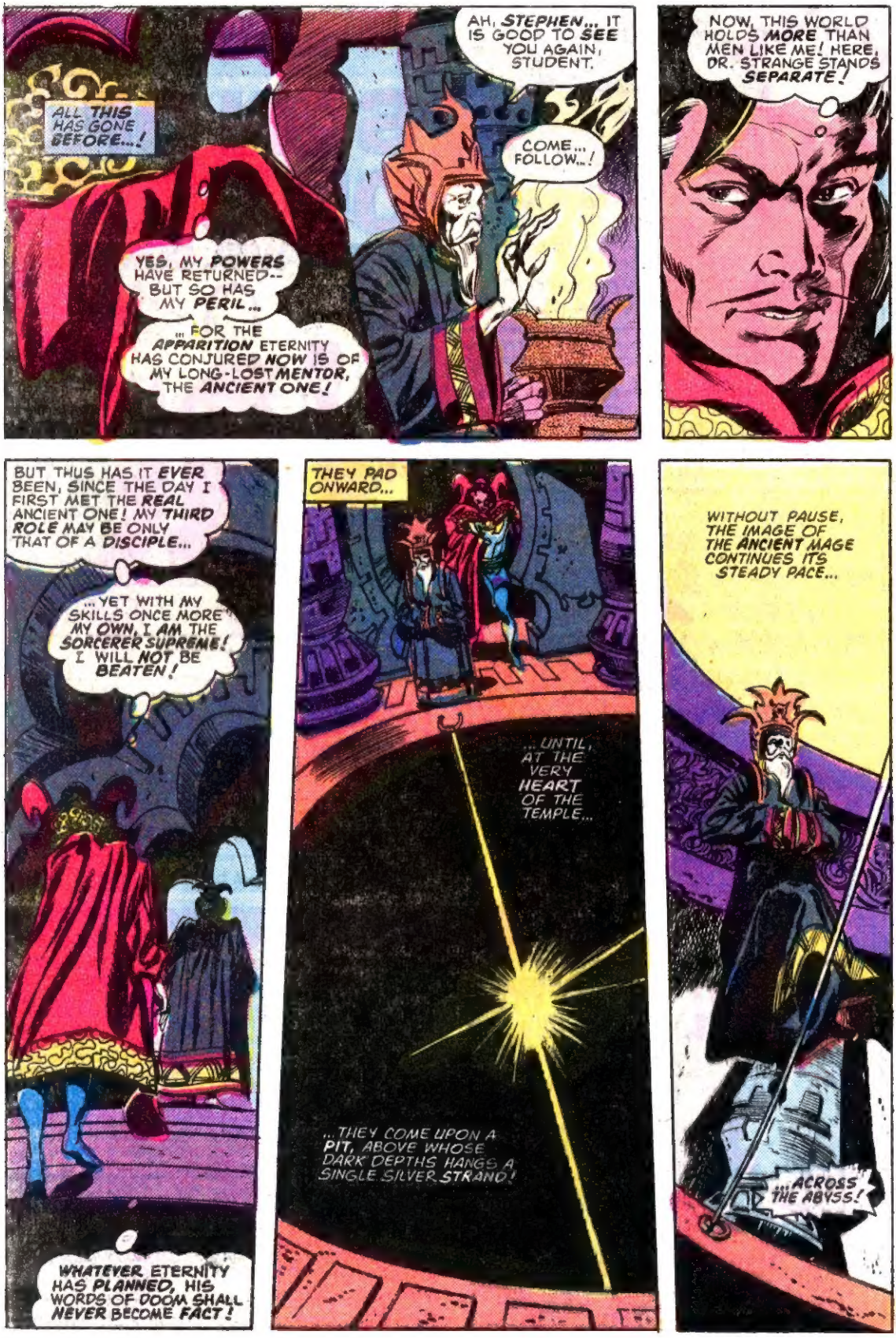
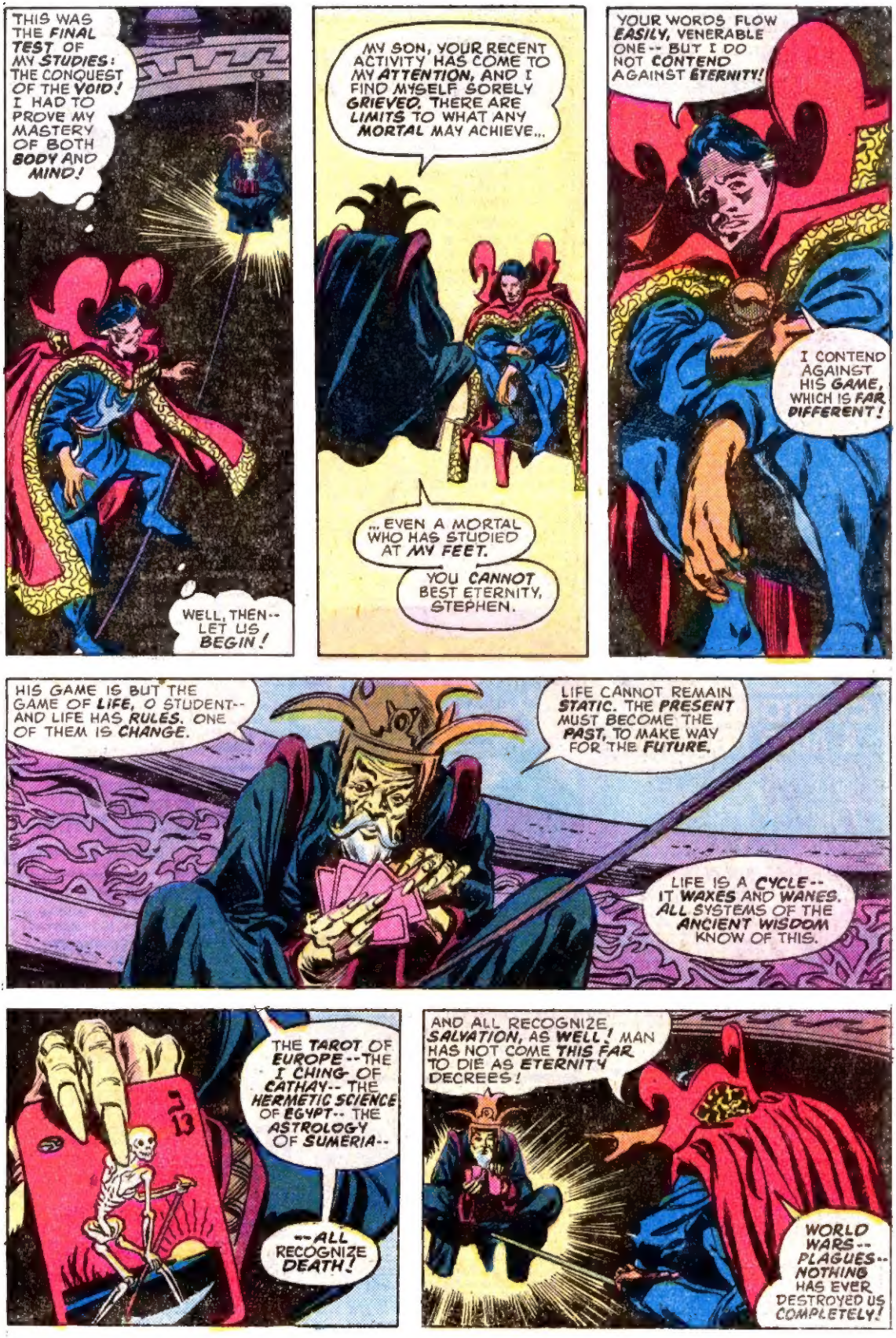

IT BEGAN WITH THE WORDS OF ETERNITY...*
CALL IT TWILIGHT OF THE GODS... CALL IT RAGNAROK... CALL IT JUDGMENT DAY...
...YOUR RACE HAS ALWAYS KNOWN IN ITS SOUL IT WOULD COME... AND IT HAS!
DR. STRANGE, ALONE OF ALL MEN, HEARD THESE WORDS, AND HE DEFIED THEIR MAKER. IN RESPONSE, ETERNITY PLACED HIM HERE...
...IN SOME NEBULOUS NETHER-WORLD.
IF YOU WOULD CONTEND, LET IT BE AGAINST YOURSELVES... FOR THERE ARE FOUR DR. STRANGES, ENCOMPASSING ALL OF HUMANITY!
*TWO ISSUES PAST. --MARV.
...AND IN THEIR CRYPTS, HE FOUND ANOTHER VICTIM-- A SELF-PITYING DRUNKARD SUCH AS HE HAD BECOME AFTER HIS SURGEON'S LIFE ENDED.
TWO MODES OF HIS MIND-- POWER-LUST AND PARANOIA...
THEY IMPRISONED HIM, FOR HE WAS WITHOUT HIS MYSTIC MIGHT...
CRUEL MEN THEY WERE, AND ARROGANT, AS STRANGE HIMSELF HAD BEEN WHEN BUT A SURGEON!
...TWO MODES ALL MEN MUST OVERCOME! STRANGE OVERCAME THEM...
...BARELY IN TIME TO TURN AWAY FROM THE LEADER'S GHOULISH GUEST, THE REGAL RED DEATH!
INSTANTLY, OTHER MEN APPEARED FROM THE SHADOWS. EACH OF THEM BORE HIS FACE... EACH SAVE THEIR LEADER, WHO HID BEHIND AN ODD MASK!
YES, STRANGE TRIUMPHED OVER THE MADNESS OF MEN...
...BUT THE MADNESS OF MAGIC YET LIES AHEAD!
WHILE AT THIS VERY MOMENT, ON OUR WORLD--
--THE ASTRAL FORM OF BARON MORDO, THE MASTER'S ARCH-ENEMY, STUMBLES INTO THE CAVE OF THE AGED GENGHIS.
MORDO IS MAD AND MINDLESS. HE HAS NO MEMORY OF INSTINCTIVELY SEEKING THE HERMIT'S SIMILAR SENILITY.
HE GAZES AT GENGHIS, DULLY... AND SNIFFS AT HIM, LIKE A DOG...
...AND SITS DOWN, FOR NO PARTICULAR REASON.
THE ONCE-GREAT MYSTIC BEFORE HIM IS UNAWARE HE'S EVEN THERE.

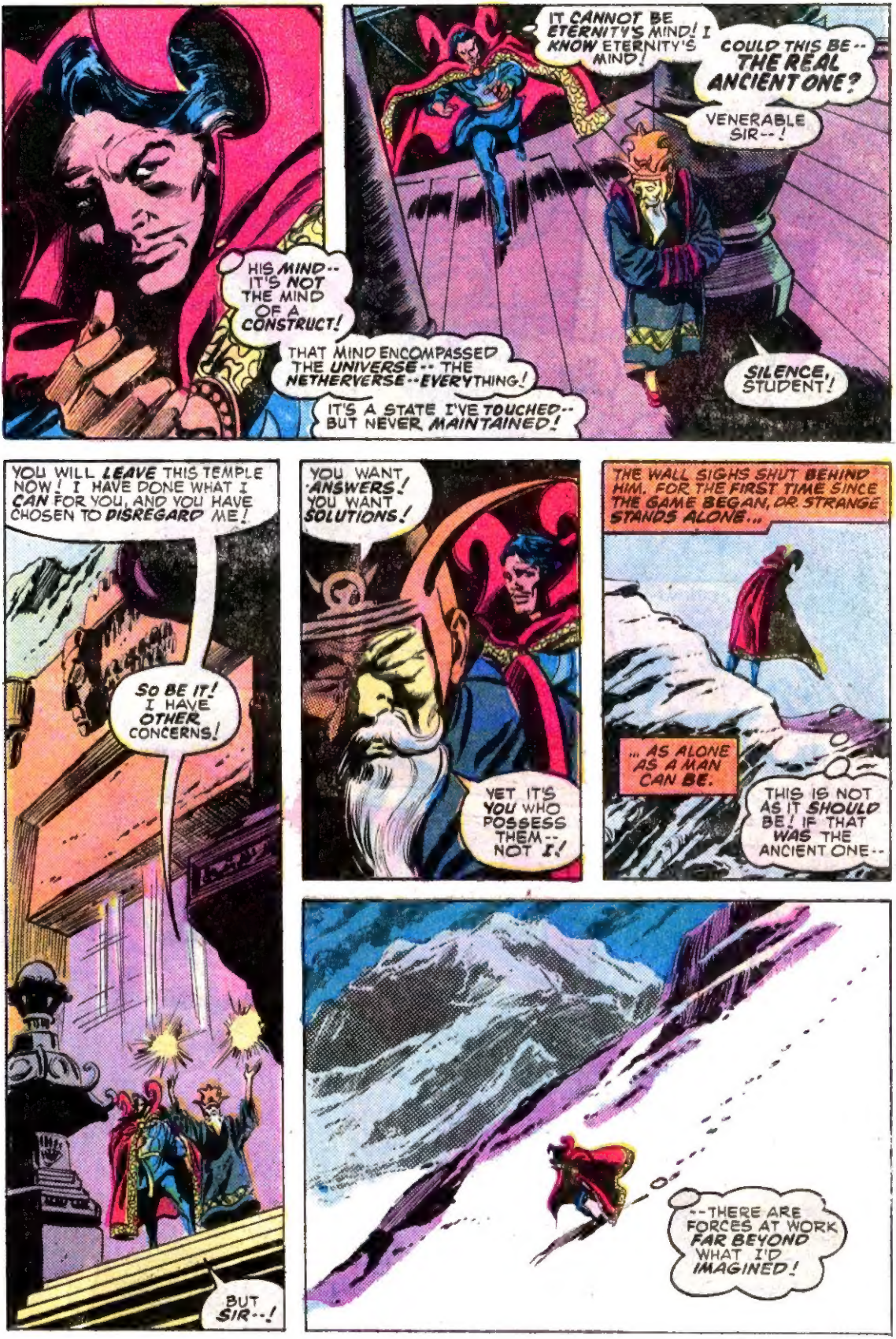

ALL THIS HAS GONE BEFORE...!
AH, STEPHEN... IT IS GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN, STUDENT.
COME... FOLLOW...!
YES, MY POWERS HAVE RETURNED-- BUT SO HAS MY PERIL...
...FOR THE APPARITION ETERNITY HAS CONJURED NOW IS OF MY LONG-LOST MENTOR, THE ANCIENT ONE!
NOW, THIS WORLD HOLDS MORE THAN MEN LIKE ME! HERE, DR. STRANGE STANDS SEPARATE!
BUT THUS HAS IT EVER BEEN, SINCE THE DAY I FIRST MET THE REAL ANCIENT ONE! MY THIRD ROLE MAY BE ONLY THAT OF A DISCIPLE...
...YET WITH MY SKILLS ONCE MORE MY OWN, I AM THE SORCERER SUPREME! I WILL NOT BE BEATEN!
WHATEVER ETERNITY HAS PLANNED, HIS WORDS OF DOOM SHALL NEVER BECOME FACT!
THEY PAD ONWARD...
...UNTIL, AT THE VERY HEART OF THE TEMPLE...
...THEY COME UPON A PIT, ABOVE WHOSE DARK DEPTHS HANGS A SINGLE SILVER STRAND!
WITHOUT PAUSE, THE IMAGE OF THE ANCIENT MAGE CONTINUES ITS STEADY PACE...
...ACROSS THE ABYSS!


THIS WAS THE FINAL TEST OF MY STUDIES: THE CONQUEST OF THE VOID! I HAD TO PROVE MY MASTERY OF BOTH BODY AND MIND!
WELL, THEN-- LET US BEGIN!
MY SON, YOUR RECENT ACTIVITY HAS COME TO MY ATTENTION, AND I FIND MYSELF SORELY GRIEVED. THERE ARE LIMITS TO WHAT ANY MORTAL MAY ACHIEVE...
... EVEN A MORTAL WHO HAS STUDIED AT MY FEET.
YOU CANNOT BEST ETERNITY, STEPHEN.
YOUR WORDS FLOW EASILY, VENERABLE ONE-- BUT I DO NOT CONTEND AGAINST ETERNITY!
I CONTEND AGAINST HIS GAME, WHICH IS FAR DIFFERENT!
HIS GAME IS BUT THE GAME OF LIFE, O STUDENT-- AND LIFE HAS RULES. ONE OF THEM IS CHANGE.
LIFE CANNOT REMAIN STATIC. THE PRESENT MUST BECOME THE PAST, TO MAKE WAY FOR THE FUTURE.
LIFE IS A CYCLE-- IT WAXES AND WANES. ALL SYSTEMS OF THE ANCIENT WISDOM KNOW OF THIS.
THE TAROT OF EUROPE--THE I CHING OF CATHAY-- THE HERMETIC SCIENCE OF EGYPT-- THE ASTROLOGY OF SUMERIA--
--ALL RECOGNIZE DEATH!
AND ALL RECOGNIZE SALVATION, AS WELL! MAN HAS NOT COME THIS FAR TO DIE AS ETERNITY DECREES!
WORLD WARS-- PLAGUES-- NOTHING HAS EVER DESTROYED US COMPLETELY!

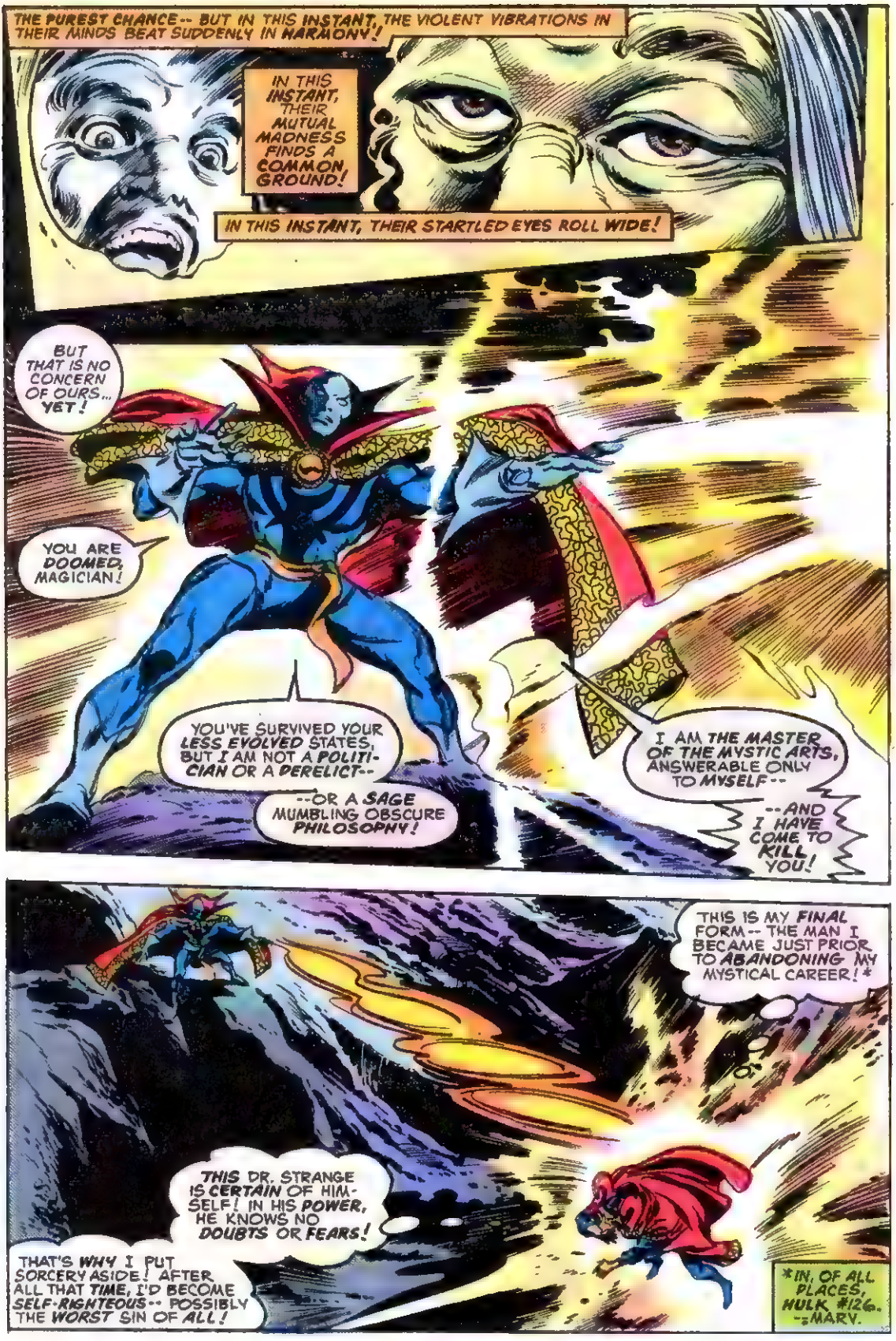
INDIVIDUAL DEATH IS INEVITABLE, PERHAPS, BUT THE END OF THE WORLD IS NOT!
YOU CANN
STEPHEN! STEPHEN, WHERE ARE YOU?
I SENSE YOUR DANGER, MY LOVE! I WISH TO JOIN YOU!
IT'S CLEA--TRYING TO CONTACT ME!*
*AS SHE DID LAST ISSUE.--M.
HER FACE FILLS MY MIND!
BUT I CANNOT RESPOND TO HER NOW! I MUST KEEP MY THOUGHTS CLEAR--UNCLUTTERED!
IT IS APPARENT YOU WILL PAY ME NO HEED. THUS, I TAKE MY LEAVE OF YOU.
I MUST CLOSE HER OFF!
SO, TO CONTINUE--!
WAIT! WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
OH NO! NOW THAT I'M A MASTER OF THE MYSTIC ARTS ONCE MORE--
--I'LL TAKE CONTROL OF THIS GAME!

I THINK NOT, STEPHEN!
DEMONS OF DENAK!
THIS CONSTRUCT OF MY MENTOR HAS POWER, TOO--
--BUT I'LL NOT BE DENIED! I SUMMON THE FLAMES OF THE FALTINE--
--TO BANISH THE BEAST!

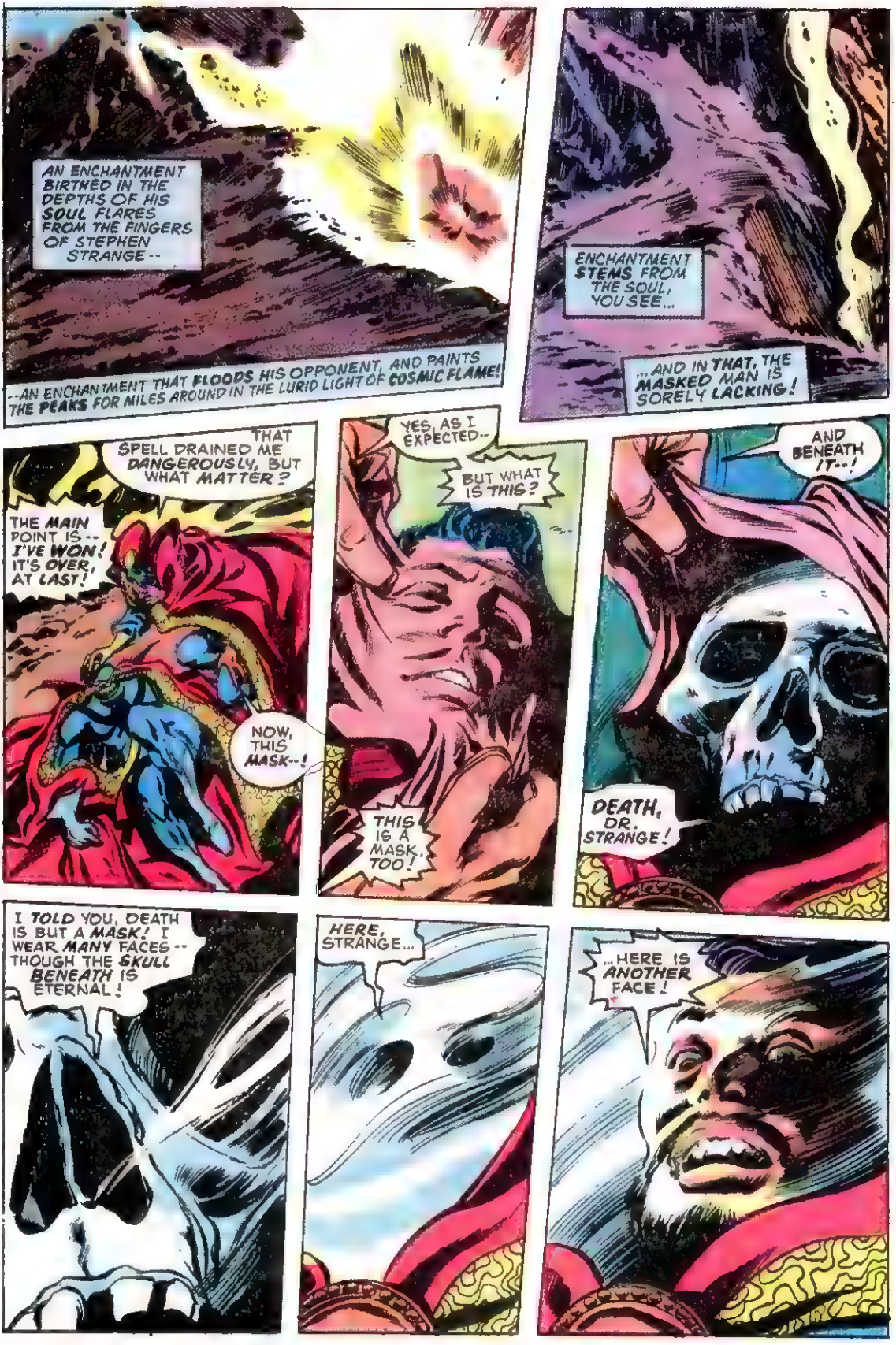
STILL, POWER AGAINST POWER IS NOT THE ANSWER HERE!
NO, THE ANSWER ARRIVES IN A MEMORY, OF MY FINAL BATTLE WITH THE REAL ANCIENT ONE!*
*IT WAS IN MARVEL PREMIERE #10.--MARV.
THEN, I ENTERED HIS BRAIN TO OVERCOME THE DEMON THAT POSSESSED HIM--
--AND THAT'S WHAT I'LL DO AGAIN!
BEFORE HIS FOE CAN COMPREHEND IT, THE MAN OF MYSTERY BECOMES A PULSE OF MIND--
--AND FLASHES INTO THE SKULL OF THE BEING BEFORE HIM!
--ONLY TO BURST BACK OUT AGAIN AT ONCE!
BY ALL THE GODS!


HIS MIND-- IT'S NOT THE MIND OF A CONSTRUCT!
THAT MIND ENCOMPASSED THE UNIVERSE-- THE NETHERVERSE--EVERYTHING!
IT'S A STATE I'VE TOUCHED-- BUT NEVER MAINTAINED!
IT CANNOT BE ETERNITY'S MIND! I KNOW ETERNITY'S MIND!
COULD THIS BE-- THE REAL ANCIENT ONE?
VENERABLE SIR--!
SILENCE, STUDENT!
YOU WILL LEAVE THIS TEMPLE NOW! I HAVE DONE WHAT I CAN FOR YOU, AND YOU HAVE CHOSEN TO DISREGARD ME!
SO BE IT! I HAVE OTHER CONCERNS!
BUT SIR--!
YOU WANT ANSWERS! YOU WANT SOLUTIONS!
YET IT'S YOU WHO POSSESS THEM-- NOT I!
THE WALL SIGHS SHUT BEHIND HIM. FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE THE GAME BEGAN, DR. STRANGE STANDS ALONE...
... AS ALONE AS A MAN CAN BE.
THIS IS NOT AS IT SHOULD BE! IF THAT WAS THE ANCIENT ONE--
--THERE ARE FORCES AT WORK FAR BEYOND WHAT I'D IMAGINED!

THE ANCIENT ONE BECAME ONE WITH THE UNIVERSE WHEN HE DIED! WHY WOULD HE INVOLVE HIMSELF IN THIS--
--UNLESS IT WAS OF DIRECT IMPORTANCE TO HIM?
DOES THAT MEAN HE WAS TELLING THE TRUTH--THAT I CAN'T OUT-PLAY ETERNITY?
MAGICIAN!
IS THE WORLD REALLY IN ITS LAST DAYS?
TURN, MAGICIAN! YOUR TIME IS UPON YOU!
NOW YOU MUST FACE--YOUR ULTIMATE SUPERIOR!
AT THIS SAME MOMENT, ELSEWHERE, TWO MINDLESS DREAMERS ARE CONTINUING THEIR FANTASIES.
NOTHING HAS CHANGED..
BUT HOLD! NOW, BARON MORDO'S RANDOM IMAGININGS IDLY STRAY TOWARD A FAMILIAR FACE...
...EVEN AS, BY THE PUREST OF CHANCE, THE MUFFLED MIND OF GENGHIS DOES THE SAME!

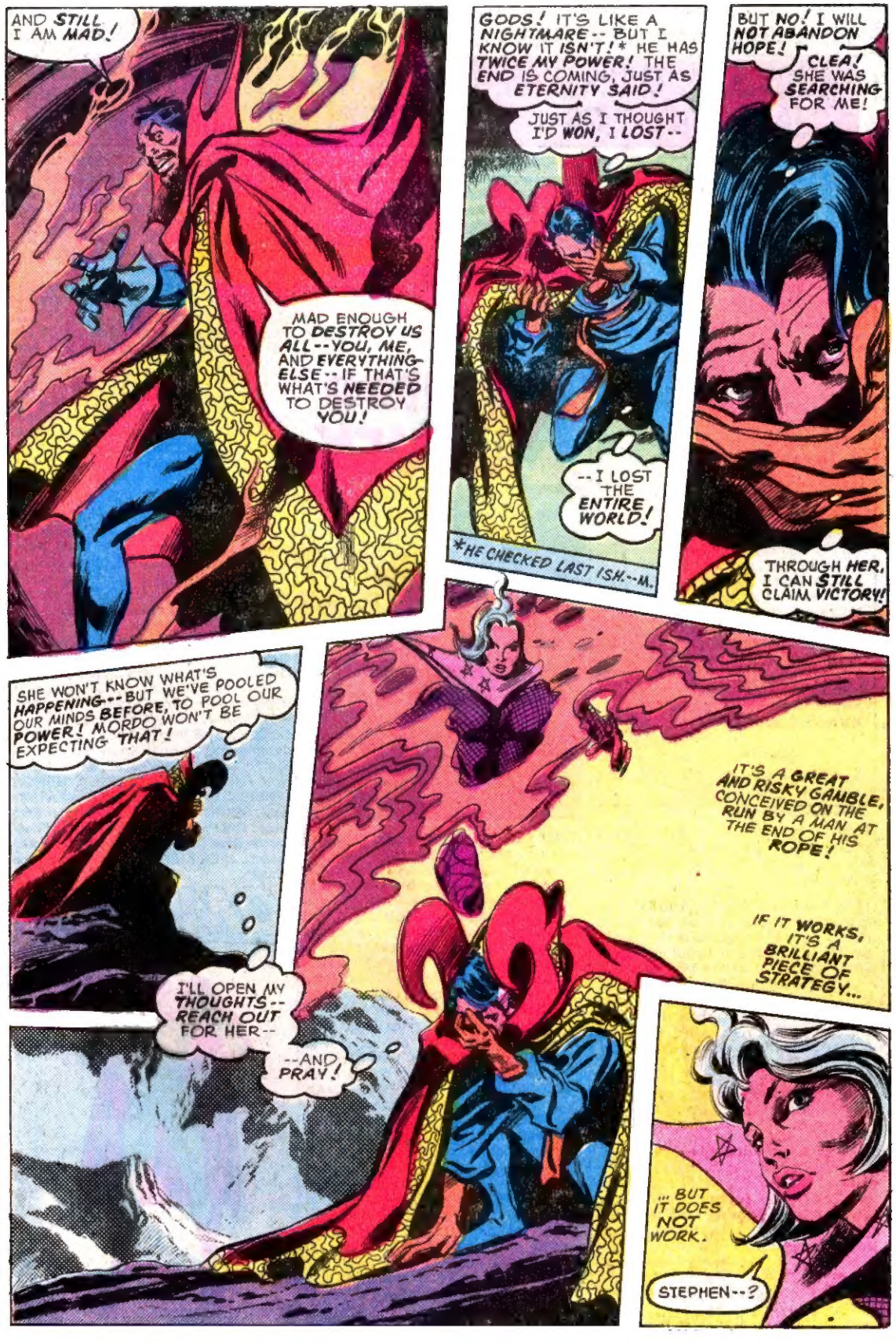

THE PUREST CHANCE-- BUT IN THIS INSTANT, THE VIOLENT VIBRATIONS IN THEIR MINDS BEAT SUDDENLY IN HARMONY!
IN THIS INSTANT, THEIR MUTUAL MADNESS FINDS A COMMON GROUND!
IN THIS INSTANT, THEIR STARTLED EYES ROLL WIDE!
BUT THAT IS NO CONCERN OF OURS... YET!
YOU ARE DOOMED, MAGICIAN!
YOU'VE SURVIVED YOUR LESS EVOLVED STATES, BUT I AM NOT A POLITICIAN OR A DERELICT--
--OR A SAGE MUMBLING OBSCURE PHILOSOPHY!
I AM THE MASTER OF THE MYSTIC ARTS, ANSWERABLE ONLY TO MYSELF--
--AND I HAVE COME TO KILL YOU!
THIS IS MY FINAL FORM-- THE MAN I BECAME JUST PRIOR TO ABANDONING MY MYSTICAL CAREER!*
THIS DR. STRANGE IS CERTAIN OF HIMSELF! IN HIS POWER, HE KNOWS NO DOUBTS OR FEARS!
THAT'S WHY I PUT SORCERY ASIDE! AFTER ALL THAT TIME, I'D BECOME SELF-RIGHTEOUS-- POSSIBLY THE WORST SIN OF ALL!
*IN, OF ALL PLACES, HULK #126. --MARV.

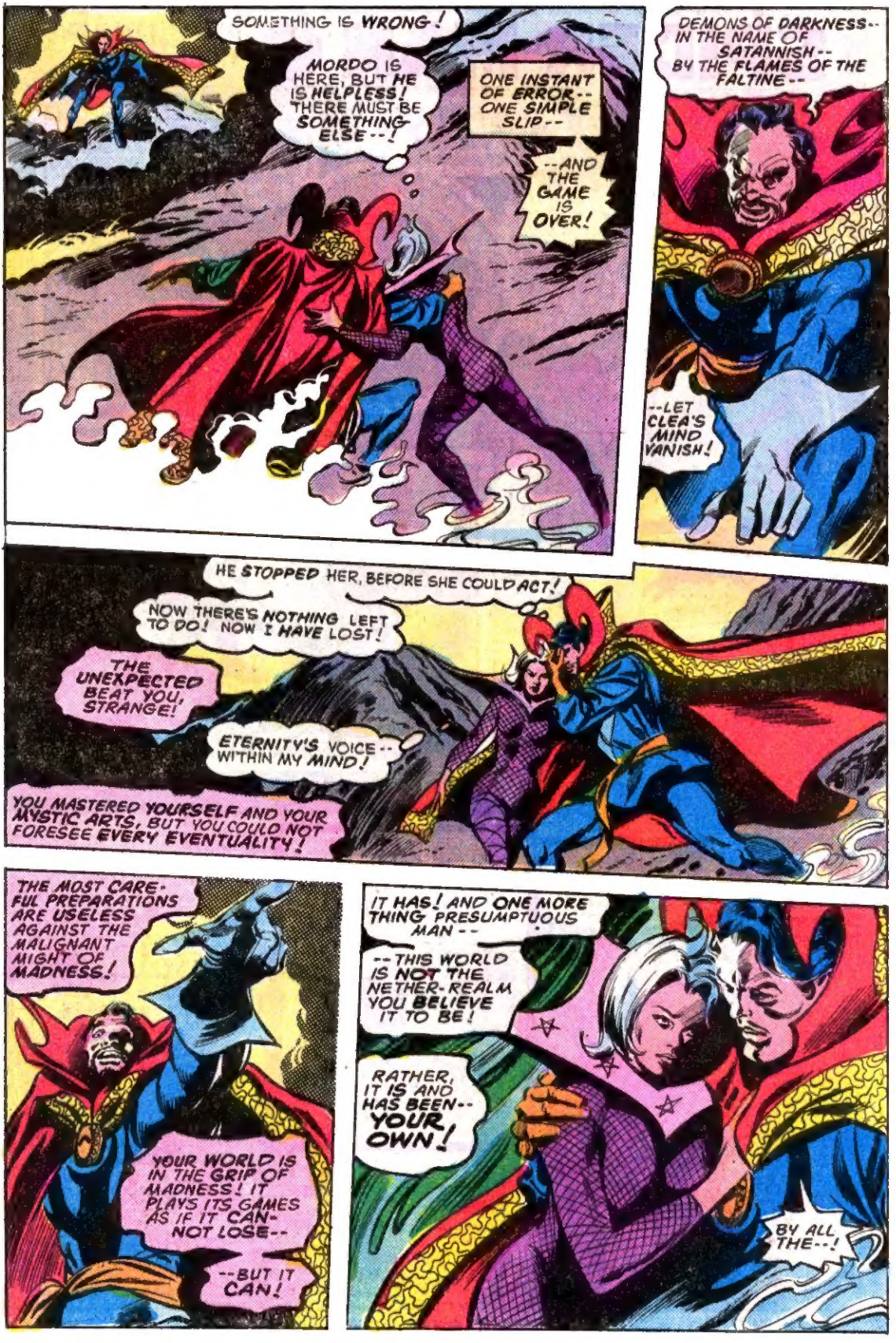
YOU'RE CONFUSED NOW, MAGICIAN! BY OPENING YOURSELF TO SEPARATE REALITIES, YOU LEARNED THAT NOTHING IS AS CERTAIN AS IT SEEMS!
YOU WERE CERTAIN YOU COULD TRIUMPH--
--BUT NOW, YOU CANNOT!
NOT SO!
I MAY NOT BE AS CERTAIN AS I WAS--
--BUT I'VE LOST NONE OF MY RESOLVE!
YOU ARE TOO CERTAIN OF YOURSELF--
--AND THAT IS YOUR UNDOING!

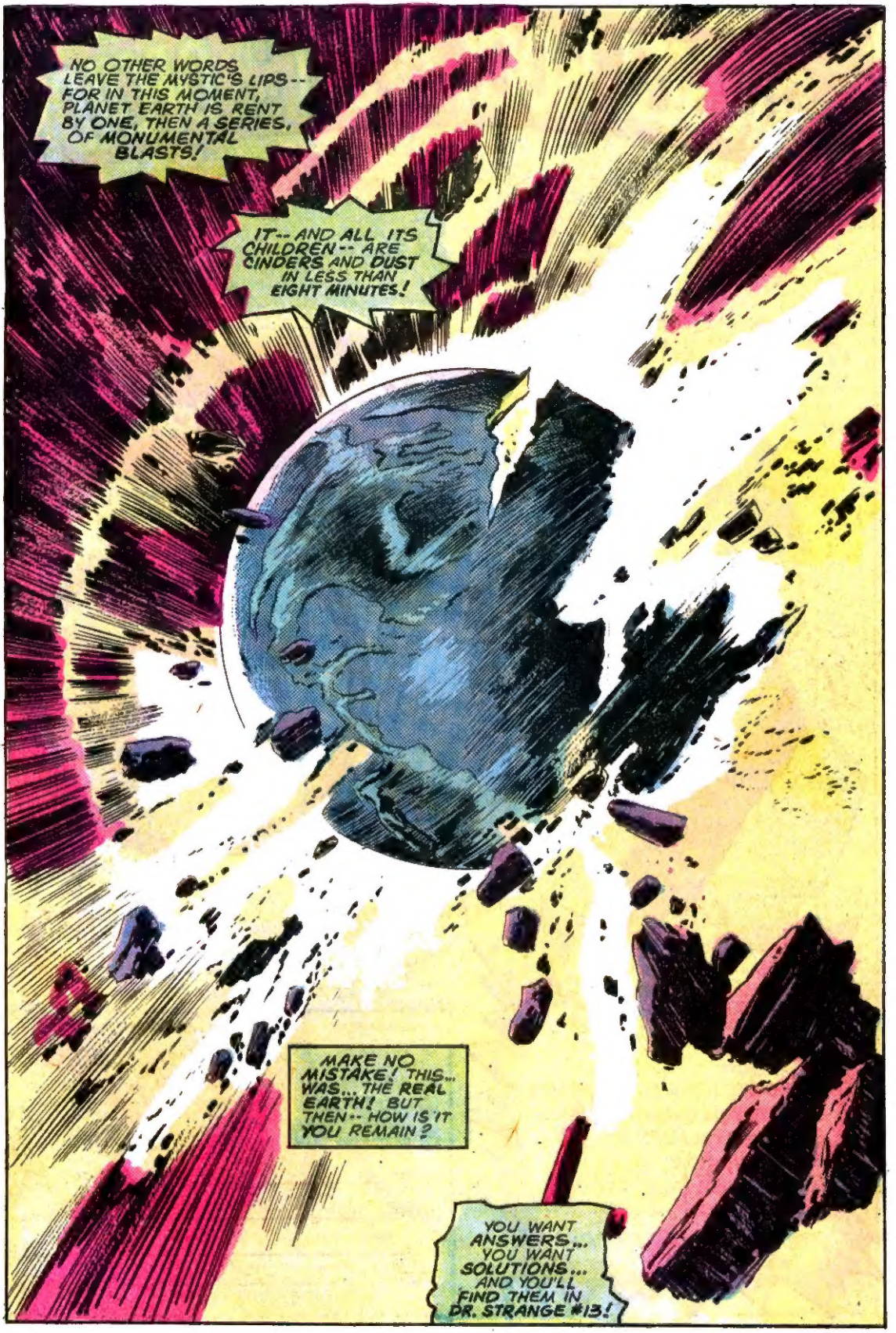

AN ENCHANTMENT BIRTHED IN THE DEPTHS OF HIS SOUL FLARES FROM THE FINGERS OF STEPHEN STRANGE--
--AN ENCHANTMENT THAT FLOODS HIS OPPONENT, AND PAINTS THE PEAKS FOR MILES AROUND IN THE LURID LIGHT OF COSMIC FLAME!
ENCHANTMENT STEMS FROM THE SOUL, YOU SEE...
...AND IN THAT, THE MASKED MAN IS SORELY LACKING!
THAT SPELL DRAINED ME DANGEROUSLY, BUT WHAT MATTER?
THE MAIN POINT IS -- I'VE WON! IT'S OVER, AT LAST!
NOW, THIS MASK--!
YES, AS I EXPECTED--
BUT WHAT IS THIS?
THIS IS A MASK, TOO!
AND BENEATH IT--!
DEATH, DR. STRANGE!
I TOLD YOU, DEATH IS BUT A MASK! I WEAR MANY FACES -- THOUGH THE SKULL BENEATH IS ETERNAL!
HERE, STRANGE...
...HERE IS ANOTHER FACE!

BY THE CRIMSON BANDS OF CYTTORAK! BARON MORDO!
YES -- BUT NO LONGER MINDLESS!
BUT MORDO IS MAD!
IN THE NAME OF THE ETERNAL VISHANTI! HIS BOLTS OF BEDEVILMENT-- INCREDIBLE!
HE'S STRONGER THAN EVER-- STRONGER THAN I! MUST-- FIGHT BACK--
--BUT--
--SO WEAK NOW--!
SLIPPING--!
SLIPPING--!!

MADNESS, STRANGE!
MADNESS IS CHAOS-- THE WORLD INSIDE-OUT--
--BUT PROVIDE A MAD-MAN WITH A MARKER, AND HE'LL FIND HIS WAY HOME!
I AM YET INSANE! GLORIOUSLY AMOK! AND THE GENGHIS IS YET SENILE--
--BUT WHEN OUR MINDS MESHED, IF ONLY FOR AN INSTANT, I FOUND PERSPECTIVE IN THE MAELSTROM!
I GAINED CONTROL--CONTROL OF THE OLD ONE, AND HIS RESER-VOIR OF WIZARDRY--
--CONTROL OF MY OWN MIGHT, SO LONG DENIED ME--
--AND CONTROL OF YOU, MY HATED FRIEND!


AND STILL I AM MAD!
MAD ENOUGH TO DESTROY US ALL--YOU, ME, AND EVERYTHING ELSE--IF THAT'S WHAT'S NEEDED TO DESTROY YOU!
GODS! IT'S LIKE A NIGHTMARE--BUT I KNOW IT ISN'T!* HE HAS TWICE MY POWER! THE END IS COMING, JUST AS ETERNITY SAID!
JUST AS I THOUGHT I'D WON, I LOST--
--I LOST THE ENTIRE WORLD!
*HE CHECKED LAST ISH.--M.
BUT NO! I WILL NOT ABANDON HOPE!
CLEA! SHE WAS SEARCHING FOR ME!
THROUGH HER, I CAN STILL CLAIM VICTORY!
SHE WON'T KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENING--BUT WE'VE POOLED OUR MINDS BEFORE, TO POOL OUR POWER! MORDO WON'T BE EXPECTING THAT!
IT'S A GREAT AND RISKY GAMBLE, CONCEIVED ON THE RUN BY A MAN AT THE END OF HIS ROPE!
IF IT WORKS, IT'S A BRILLIANT PIECE OF STRATEGY...
I'LL OPEN MY THOUGHTS--REACH OUT FOR HER--
--AND PRAY!
... BUT IT DOES NOT WORK.
STEPHEN--?


SOMETHING IS WRONG!
MORDO IS HERE, BUT HE IS HELPLESS! THERE MUST BE SOMETHING ELSE--!
ONE INSTANT OF ERROR-- ONE SIMPLE SLIP--
--AND THE GAME IS OVER!
DEMONS OF DARKNESS-- IN THE NAME OF SATANNISH-- BY THE FLAMES OF THE FALTINE--
--LET CLEA'S MIND VANISH!
HE STOPPED HER, BEFORE SHE COULD ACT!
NOW THERE'S NOTHING LEFT TO DO! NOW I HAVE LOST!
THE UNEXPECTED BEAT YOU, STRANGE!
ETERNITY'S VOICE-- WITHIN MY MIND!
YOU MASTERED YOURSELF AND YOUR MYSTIC ARTS, BUT YOU COULD NOT FORESEE EVERY EVENTUALITY!
THE MOST CAREFUL PREPARATIONS ARE USELESS AGAINST THE MALIGNANT MIGHT OF MADNESS!
YOUR WORLD IS IN THE GRIP OF MADNESS! IT PLAYS ITS GAMES AS IF IT CANNOT LOSE--
--BUT IT CAN!
IT HAS! AND ONE MORE THING PRESUMPTUOUS MAN--
--THIS WORLD IS NOT THE NETHER-REALM YOU BELIEVE IT TO BE!
RATHER, IT IS AND HAS BEEN-- YOUR OWN!
BY ALL THE--!


NO OTHER WORDS LEAVE THE MYSTIC'S LIPS -- FOR IN THIS MOMENT, PLANET EARTH IS RENT BY ONE, THEN A SERIES, OF MONUMENTAL BLASTS!
IT -- AND ALL ITS CHILDREN -- ARE CINDERS AND DUST IN LESS THAN EIGHT MINUTES!
MAKE NO MISTAKE! THIS... WAS... THE REAL EARTH! BUT THEN -- HOW IS IT YOU REMAIN?
YOU WANT ANSWERS... YOU WANT SOLUTIONS... AND YOU'LL FIND THEM IN DR. STRANGE #13!